



THE HERALD

a publication of *Eastern Christian School*
Volume 66, Issue 1

FOR SUCH A TIME
AS THIS

+ STEWARDSHIP REPORT

SPRING 2025

For such a time as this



Educators often ask: How can we equip our students for a world that doesn't yet exist? Our youngest preschoolers will graduate in 2040, and many of them will likely see the next century. What challenges and opportunities will they encounter? What skills will they need in the second half of the 21st century? And how can we best prepare them?

Throughout this year, we've kept you updated on our accreditation process and strategic plan. We believe that its three guiding pillars—faith, excellence, and community—are enduring values that will serve our students well for decades to come. We are excited to share stories of how these values are actively shaping our school today.

Eastern Christian School remains steadfast in its commitment to a Christian worldview, faith formation, and discipleship. This commitment is being strengthened through Teaching for Transformation staff training, engaging chapels, and meaningful service-learning experiences.

We continue to pursue excellence through innovative programs, including enhancements to our Honors Academy and expanded internship opportunities. Our growing student body is a testament to the strength of our mission, and we are thrilled to announce plans for the Wyckoff addition.

As our school community expands and becomes more diverse, we are committed to deepening relationships through initiatives such as the Parent Academy, young alumni gatherings, and student letters to pastors. And as you read this year's Stewardship Report, we hope you'll join us in gratitude for the many faithful donors who make Eastern Christian's mission possible.

In this issue, you will also read about the remarkable life of one of our distinguished alumni, who passed away at the age of 99. The Eastern Christian School community spans generations and three centuries, united by a shared belief that the teaching and learning we provide is essential in preparing students for a lifetime of service. Our confidence does not rest in a secret educational formula, but in our unwavering hope in a faithful God who has "fully equipped us for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17).

The Herald offers a glimpse into the vibrant life of our school—our classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, stages, and athletic fields. Yet, it only scratches the surface of the incredible ways our students and alumni are fulfilling their callings. I hope this issue inspires and encourages you as we continue this journey together.

Ruth Kuder '84
Executive Director and Head of School



EASTERN CHRISTIAN
SCHOOL

THE HERALD

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IN THIS ISSUE



PAGE 5
Student leaders at Spruce Lake

2

CAMPUS NEWS

- 2 EC emerging as national leader
- 4 Strategic plan
- 6 Community of believers
- 8 Around the school in five photos

19

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

41

EC SPORTS

- 41 End of season summaries

10

FOUNDATION, EVENTS & ALUMNI NEWS

- 10 Campaign announcement
- 12 Bill and Jean Borduin
- 13 Business directory
- 14 Events
- 16 Tribute to Herman Jeffer
- 17 In memoriam
- 18 Alumni news



PAGE 9
Students sing during chapel

The Herald is a bi-annual publication of The Foundation for Eastern Christian School. The purpose of this publication is to share the story of Eastern Christian School and to strengthen the bonds among our extended school community in support of Christian education. ***The Herald* is mailed free of charge to over 6,500 alumni, families, and friends of the school.**

Our address database is always being updated. If you would like to update your contact information or if you know of someone who would like to receive *The Herald*, please contact The Foundation for Eastern Christian School Association office and we will be very happy to update our database accordingly.

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Eastern Christian School emerging as a national leader

Leading in Christian education

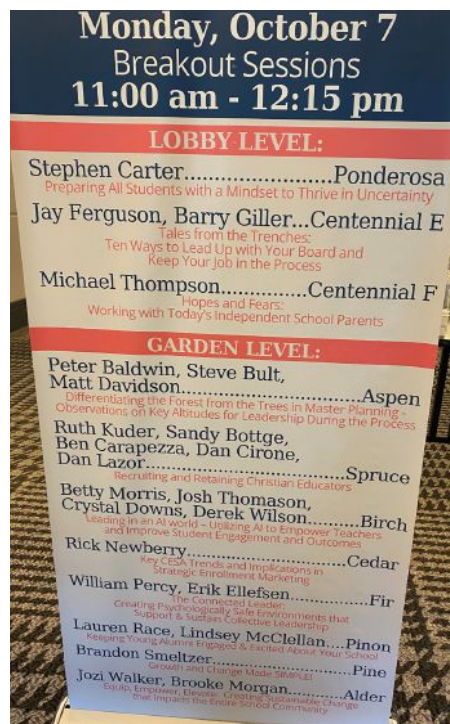
Nestled in the foothills of the Colorado Rockies, the CESA Symposium brought together principals, heads of schools and educational administrators from across the country.

As members and prospective members of The Council on Educational Standards and Accountability (CESA), the 600+ attendees represented leadership at some of the nation's most distinguished Christian schools. The gathering's purpose was to learn from each other, mutually edifying one another toward the cause of excellent Christian education.

Among the list of speakers stood a few familiar names: Head of School **Dr. Ruth Kuder**, Director of Learning **Ben Carapezza**, and principals **Dan Cirone**, **Dr. Dan Lazor** and **Sandy Bottge**. Their presentation, "Recruiting and Retaining Christian Educators," focused on best practices to retain talent, as well as methods on cultivating a culture that enabled Eastern Christian School to win the Top Workplaces in NJ award. Regarding the opportunity to present at CESA, Kuder says, "our team appreciated the opportunity to share some of the strategies that have been effective for us."



Visiting educators spend time talking to EC high school students.



Left: EC staff present to a packed session of educators; Right: Signage at the CESA conference.

We were honored to be included as presenters and enjoyed collaborating with like-minded educators from across the country."

Eastern Christian School has also been receiving attention on the national Christian education scene. "Our colleagues in other schools are curious about how our school is thriving," says Kuder. "The Northeast is not the easiest cultural climate for a Christian school and this has forced us to sharpen all aspects of our work." EC has been visited by Ambassador Christian School, Dawn Treader Christian School and Wilberforce Academy leaders this fall, all seeking to learn more about the way Christian education works at EC. Teacher blogs from educators Jim Uitermarkt and Jessica

Truran have been republished by Christian Schools International. And high school principal, Dan Cirone, was asked by JOMO Founder & CEO Christina Crook to present at the Converge conference this school year. His presentation focused on digital well-being for high school students.

Kuder adds, "We recognize that Christian schools around the country are in the business of shaping lives. We rejoice in the faithfulness of the Lord and his faithfulness to us, his people. To whom much is given much is expected. We are happy to share our experience when it is helpful for the cause of Christian education, especially as we work together for such a time as this."

"WE REJOICE IN THE FAITHFULNESS OF THE LORD AND HIS FAITHFULNESS TO US, HIS PEOPLE. TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN MUCH IS EXPECTED. WE ARE HAPPY TO SHARE OUR EXPERIENCE WHEN IT IS HELPFUL FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, ESPECIALLY AS WE WORK TOGETHER FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS."

– Dr. Ruth Kuder

Updates on the strategic plan

Goals related to faith, excellence and community



Parent Academy: Don Wickstrum
from *I Am Second* presented to
parents this fall.

has led to the launch of the EC Parent Academy. The new initiative is designed to further support parent education and strengthen our shared commitment to their children's academic and spiritual growth. In its inaugural sessions this fall, EC welcomed dozens of parents from across the district.

"At Eastern Christian School, we recognize that building up strong families is foundational to raising a generation of Christ-centered leaders and world-changers," says **Ben Carapezza**, director of learning. "The Parent Academy reflects our unwavering commitment to this work by equipping parents with the tools, insights, and

spiritual encouragement they need to navigate today's challenges with confidence and faith."

Last spring, the school unveiled a five-year strategic plan with goals related to faith, excellence and community. The Eastern Christian School staff has not wasted time putting these goals into action. Below are just a few highlights from the fall.

PARENT ACADEMY

Strategic Plan Goal: *Ensure that families and staff who are new to the school community feel a sense of belonging*

Updates: Technology, mental health, leadership, biblical worldview, living on mission: The topics encompass a wide spectrum of thought but are held together by a common thread. Each of these represent concerns and desires relevant to today's Christian parents.

At Eastern Christian School, our mission has always been to partner with parents and local churches to raise the next generation of Christ's transforming agents. Our goal to increase a sense of belonging

TEACHING FOR TRANSFORMATION (TfT)

Strategic Plan Goal: *Equip teachers to instruct from a Christian worldview throughout all content areas*

Updates: What if school connected me to my neighbor? What if learning is another form of worshipping God? What if my schoolwork could make the world a better place? Before the school year began, teachers explored their "deep hope" for students and for the school by completing training in the TfT framework. Developed by Dordt University, Teaching for Transformation helps teachers strengthen faith integration in the classroom and beyond. In the first two days of the school year, teachers explored what it means to "be about the transformation of students and teachers so that they might have the mind, heart and life of Christ—that is, to be Responsive Disciples." By the end of the school year, teachers and staff will



Spruce Lake: Honors Academy students attended the 7th grade trip this year.

have completed eight training modules, with eight to follow next year.

"After 44 years, I continue to teach at EC because I believe in the mission of the school, and I want to be a part of God's story here. I want to learn how best to integrate my faith in my teaching, honoring our Mission Statement by preparing our students to be transforming agents in our global society. I appreciate the opportunity to train my colleagues in this program because I believe that Tft will enable us to weave our Mission Statement into our teaching so that it comes alive in our teaching and in the lives of our students," says Phil Verrengia, teacher, member of the School Improvement Team and the first Tft trainer for EC.

HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMMING: HONORS ACADEMY

Strategic Plan Goal: Enhance academic programming

Updates: This fall, 15 Eastern Christian High School sophomores traveled to the Spruce Lake Retreat Center to serve as student-leaders for our seventh graders. One of those high school students, Joseph Virga, recounted the joy of leading and participating in small group discussions. He shares, "I loved it because I got to see firsthand how God can work through these kids."

The Spruce Lake retreat provided sophomores in our newly launched Honors Academy the

experience of practicing servant leadership. The Honors Academy is a competitive program requiring an application. Students must maintain a 3.75 GPA per semester, complete at least 10 honors, advanced placement (AP), or dual enrollment courses and participate in at least one national or regional academic competition. In addition to rigorous academic requirements, students complete a service component and an additional enrichment like attending leadership lectures.



Phil Verrengia leads a Teaching for Transformation (Tft) session on a staff professional development day.



Students sell bracelets to raise money for Asheville Christian.

Community of believers

Connecting to the larger story

Eastern Christian School is part of a community of believers that spans distance and time. Here are a few ways our students are connecting to the larger story.

WINGS THRIVING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The WINGS program continues to grow and expand under the leadership of two co-directors, **Ben Carapezza** and **Jessica Lagerveld**. WINGS, a work-based learning program providing students with real-world career opportunities, enables juniors and seniors at Eastern Christian School to intern within their desired field while still earning academic credit.

"Once students are matched with a business partner, they spend one block of their school day working on-site with their employer. Students are involved in a variety of assignments depending on their field. It's an invaluable experience and can help bolster college portfolios and applications," says Carapezza.

Lagerveld adds, "In addition to learning about a specific industry, students develop a broad range of critical life skills, including problem-solving, managing a busy schedule, appropriate employer/employee communications and workplace integrity. Students write their own resume, practice interviewing and learn the value of a strong handshake."

Elliana Algarin at her WINGS internship.



WINGS is possible through a strong network of local organizations with connections to EC alumni and parents. This fall semester, students were placed at a variety of businesses and nonprofits, including Axon, City Relief, LAN Associates, Leegwater Electric, Neglia, Reiner and many others. This spring, the number of students taking advantage of the program will nearly double in size.

PASTOR APPRECIATION MONTH

In October, upper elementary school students wrote a letter of encouragement to one of their pastors or a Sunday School teacher for Pastor Appreciation Month. Students were asked to write about what they learned from their chosen pastor and what made their pastor special. They were also tasked with sharing a Bible verse or prayer.

"Historically, EC has recognized the importance of a partnership between the school, home and church in a child's formation. A school would be a pathetic replacement for a family or a church! Therefore, our partnership with the local church is critical. There are many tangible ways that EC partners with local churches," shares Karyn Baitzel, upper elementary director.

In total, 194 letters were mailed out. Baitzel adds, "We are grateful for all the pastors and Sunday school teachers who walk alongside us as we disciple the hearts of the next generation. We hope they feel appreciated!"

SCHOOLS AROUND THE WORLD WALK ALONGSIDE ASHEVILLE CHRISTIAN AFTER HURRICANE

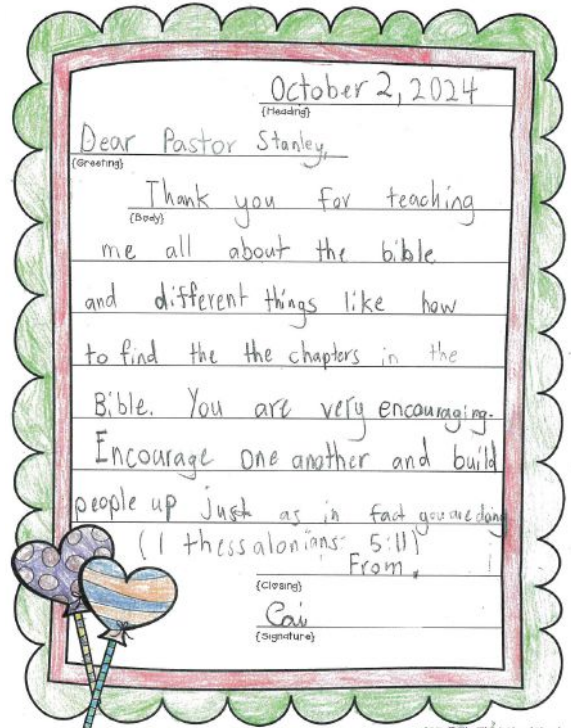
During HomeComing weekend in October, Eastern Christian's sixth grade students, under the leadership of teacher Nate Ottens, sold cotton candy and friendship bracelets to raise money for Asheville Christian School, a sister school that was devastated by Hurricane Helene. Their efforts raised \$1,600, as well as several additional online donations sent directly to Asheville.

Asheville Christian, which had been displaced by the tragedy until January, was buoyed by the support of more than 100 schools across the nation and even the world, with donations coming from as far away as the South Pacific Ocean. Eastern Christian's donations went toward replacing classroom supplies and other needed items, according to Asheville Christian.



Cotton candy sales to support Asheville Christian School.

Mary Ellen Gillespie, director of marketing and communications of Asheville Christian adds, "Thank you for your care and your prayers for our school and our students. While all of our students and their families were impacted by the power, water and phone disruptions, only a small number had significant damage to personal homes, and some had tree damage. Our school community's biggest challenge has been being displaced for the past three months...we are grateful that you at Eastern Christian were faithful to respond generously to our great need. God bless!"



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A sample of a final pastor appreciation letter.

Around the school in 5 photos

Highlights from school programs



UPPER ELEMENTARY WINTER CONCERT

The arts have always been an important component to an Eastern Christian School education. This year, fourth and fifth graders were required to join a performing ensemble of their choice: orchestra, beginning band, or choir. This year's upper elementary school orchestra included 29 students. Some are pictured performing to a packed house during the Upper Elementary Winter Concert. The program continues to grow and expand, as an additional 26 students in the third grade have elected to join beginning violin (not pictured).

"It has been a lot of fun to work with students who are so excited to learn an instrument," comments **Melissa Macy**, orchestra director, "there is a thrill to watching students opening up their case and seeing their instruments for the first time—it's better than Christmas morning!"

EC COLLEGE ROAD TRIP

This fall, 18 high school students and three staff members embarked on a whirlwind trip to visit five colleges in four days (pictured here, the students pose at Wake Forest University). Sponsored by the Academic & College Counseling Office (ACC), the EC College Road Trip is an annual opportunity

for juniors and seniors. Each year, students explore a range of colleges and universities, from large to small, public to private, Christian to non-Christian.

Jesse Struck, director of the ACC, explains, "Our goal is to expose students to different types of schools so that they can walk away, not only with the experience of

having visited a school they may attend, but with a better understanding of their categorical preferences when it comes to choosing a university."

The College Road Trip is part of the ACC's extensive strategy to guide students and families through every step of the college application process, a journey that begins as early as the end of eighth grade.





Recently, one classroom engaged in learning which centered around the pretend play of creating an auto shop. Using creative materials such as paint sticks and a classroom organized into 'centers,' children created signs, labeled objects, answered 'phones,' waited in a waiting room and counted coins. The engaging exercise encouraged exploration, nurtured problem-solving and interpersonal skills and taught pre-kindergarten concepts such as letters and counting. Vander Wall adds, "It's a child-directed way of hitting all the state preschool standards—without a worksheet."

EC WAY

The EC Way Tour is a field trip designed for teachers, staff and board members who have been newly hired by EC. It is also open to long-time EC employees who have not yet experienced the tour. This year's EC Way Tour happened in October and included campus tours of Midland Park, Wyckoff and North Haledon, as well as ditto, the upscale resale store that supports the school financially.

The event is a fun way to get to know colleagues across the school, but it is also an important tool to acclimate staff to the EC community and to enforce Eastern Christian's faithful pursuit of excellence in all facets of the organization. "As a new employee, I appreciated participating in this tour and being an eyewitness to an excellent Christian education. It strengthened my commitment to carrying out the mission of the school," says **Justin Hwang**, high school dean of students.

PLAY-BASED LEARNING

In Midland Park, our youngest learners prepare for kindergarten through Play-Based Learning. "We use Play-Based Learning because it's been proven through research over and over again as the most effective way for young students to learn," shares **Sarah Vander Wall**, preschool director.



CHAPEL

Eastern Christian School is proud to partner with local churches whose devout, gifted, and encouraging pastors lead weekly chapels tailored to the age group of each school. Students also regularly use their gifts to participate in chapel. For example, student teams and individual classes may glorify the Lord through scripture reading, singing, prayer, and worship dance, as well as serving behind-the-scenes when appropriate.



"Every year our school reflects on an annual spiritual theme. This year our theme is Grow, Gather, Go, based on the verses, Hebrews 10:23-25," shares **Leah Genuario**, Bible & Worship adviser at the high school. "No matter the grade level, it is a great privilege to take time out of our week to worship the Lord. To serve in a school with students from 200 different churches has brought an incredible richness to the worship experience that often makes me reflect on the vision of heaven we see in Revelation."

Building on a firm foundation

Capital campaign of \$4.7+ million is launched



Eastern Christian School has been blessed with decades of wise, forward-thinking leadership in its board of directors and administration. As a result, we have a strong, established school with excellent facilities on 42 acres of land across three campuses.

Eastern Christian is not only the oldest and largest Christian school in the tri-state area, but it is also one of the fastest-growing. More and more families are choosing EC for their children's education and faith formation. We have witnessed surging enrollment over the past decade, growing from 700 students to nearly 970.

Over the past two years, the school board, administration, as well as select staff and faculty members, have explored many options to address this enlarged enrollment. As part of our in-depth strategic planning process, we've determined it is time to add six classrooms in Wyckoff, allowing us to serve with excellence our entire student body.

In 1959, when the Wyckoff campus was constructed, the leaders of our school made a bold and wise decision. The building was designed in such a way that an addition to Wyckoff would be part of the campus master plan when needed. That time is now. This new wing on the back of the Middle School

building (adjacent to the upper field) will serve our growing enrollment. This addition is the capstone of our strategic plan, allowing us to steward well our facilities and resources to meet immediate and long-term needs.

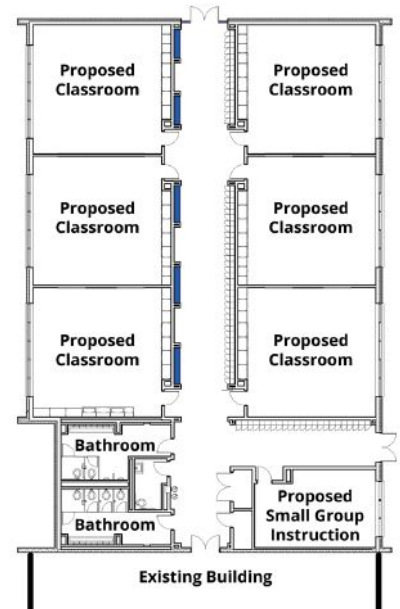
To this end, we were thrilled to announce at our Auction Gala on April 4 the launching of the public phase of our capital campaign, ***Building on a Firm Foundation***.

The campaign includes a cash goal of \$3 million to be received over three years to help cover the \$4.5 million needed for the building project. In

addition, EC has included a \$1.7 million planned and estate goal in the campaign, for an overall campaign goal of \$4.7 million. The quiet phase of the campaign began at the start of this school year. Between September and March, Head of School **Ruth Kuder** and Executive Director **Maura Byrnes** met individually with 60 individuals, couples and businesses, inviting them to support this campaign. By mid-March, the Lord had blessed EC with approximately \$2.8 million in cash and pledges for the addition, as well as \$1.7 million in signed commitments of future estate gifts, for a total of \$4.5 million.

The plan is to maximize philanthropy and minimize debt, so we are continuing to reach out and invite more people to invest in our students. "We want to have everyone's fingerprints on this project," says Kuder.

"A gift to ***Building on a Firm Foundation***, is about covering the costs of the new educational wing, but at its core, it is truly an investment in our students – in their faith formation, in their boldness in sharing the gospel, and in their ability to carry out God's mission of renewing all of creation," says Byrnes. Chief Financial Officer **Rick DeBel** remarks, "By inviting philanthropic support, we can minimize financing. I'm delighted that in time we will be able



to remove the modular classrooms and eliminate those costly rental fees. But, most of all, this initiative is about providing excellence to our students now, while preparing to offer even more enriching opportunities for future generations."

Suzanne Kraai, director of enrollment, shares, "Joyfully, we pursue the opportunity to build high-quality facilities to serve our student population as they move through our school district over the years, helping us to steward a long-lasting, healthy enrollment."

According to **Dr. Dan Lazor**, upper elementary and middle school principal, "The bold investments made through the **Building on a Firm Foundation** campaign will keep EC on an ascending trajectory for years to come. We are determined to settle for nothing less than giving our very best for God's glory."

With the creation of this new educational wing in the middle school, EC will ultimately serve additional students in the high school. This expanded enrollment in the future on the North Haledon campus will generate more revenue in tuition with

minimal increases in overhead. With this expansion and income, we will continually enrich our academic programming and enhance staffing.

Ruth Kuder concludes, "Our graduates think critically, exhibit curiosity and develop discernment, which enables them to intentionally strive for excellence in every endeavor. Only by joining together with alumni, parents and other friends, will we continue to serve as a model of excellence in Christian education. To carry out this vision, I invite every reader to join us in **Building on a Firm Foundation**."

Please use this QR code to learn more details about this project and how you can invest in our students:



www.easternchristian.org/campaign

Giving out of gratitude

Bill and Jean Borduin



leadership and vision. Their donation, which was gratefully received, will be directed to the Project Hope Scholarship Fund.

"This scholarship fund provides opportunity for those less fortunate. Those who often face significant challenges will now have the opportunity to pursue a higher education and build a better future. Project Hope scholarships provide a special child an excellent education," Bill remarks.

There are a total of 20 current

"I'm often reminded of the opportunity my folks gave me from kindergarten through twelfth grade at EC. They worked hard for me to have the benefit of a solid, faith-based education" says Bill Borduin, an alumnus from the Class of 1962, during a recent visit to the North Haledon campus with his wife, Jean.

"Both my daughter Renee '88 and son Wayne '92 have shared with us their gratitude for caring teachers and for being exposed to the truth of God's word within a faith-based worldview. In addition, lifelong friendships were made and nurtured with fellow students," he adds.

"My dad, Peter Borduin, served on various boards at Eastern Christian for 30 years. He would be amazed to see the growth and appropriate recognition the school has received. Jean and I purposely came to visit the school this year to have a tour with Ruth Kuder and see all the major improvements."

While visiting, the Borduins gave a generous gift to Eastern Christian, in recognition of the school's

students from all three campuses who receive Project Hope's need-based scholarships. The scholars receiving this tuition assistance are from Paterson, Prospect Park and Haledon, and their families are living at or near the Federal Poverty Level (\$32,150 for a family of four.) They are often the first ones in their family who will attend college after they graduate high school. This tuition assistance from donors such as Bill and Jean Borduin is life-changing – academically and spiritually.

"I am very grateful for Bill and Jean's kindness and encouragement," says **Dr. Ruth Kuder**, "My hope is that others will be inspired by the Borduins' generosity and also provide gifts toward scholarships, investing in kingdom purposes and transforming students' lives."

If you would like to learn more about how you can make a difference in the life of a student by supporting scholarships, please take a look at the EC website or contact us at foundation@easternchristian.org.

"MY HOPE IS THAT OTHERS WILL BE INSPIRED BY THE BORDUINS' GENEROSITY AND ALSO PROVIDE GIFTS TOWARD SCHOLARSHIPS, INVESTING IN KINGDOM PURPOSES AND TRANSFORMING STUDENTS' LIVES." — Ruth Kuder

Platinum Seal of Transparency

Awarded to the Foundation for EC

The Foundation for Eastern Christian School is proud to announce it has been awarded the Platinum Seal of Transparency from Candid, the world's largest source of nonprofit information. This recognition is a testament to the Foundation's commitment to accountability, ethical fundraising practices and financial transparency.

A Platinum Seal of Transparency signifies that EC has shared information about the institution's goals, strategies, capabilities, achievements and progress. For potential donors, this seal means that the Foundation has provided easy access to

financial data. With this transparency, donors can confidently make informed decisions, knowing exactly how their contributions are enriching classrooms, supporting student success and helping students grow in their relationship with the Lord.

Less than 1 percent of all nonprofits in the United States have earned the Platinum Seal of Transparency. This is the highest level of recognition given by Candid. We are incredibly honored and humbled to receive this award and are committed to continuing this transparency and accountability for our community and donors.

Third party giving platform

EC receives first cryptocurrency donation

EC is always looking for ways to facilitate philanthropy among our donors and in December, EC integrated a third party giving platform, which allows EC to accept donations through multiple payment avenues such as PayPal, Venmo, Google and Apple Pay, stocks, mutual funds and cryptocurrency.

Since launching this new platform, we are pleased to announce that not only did we increase the number of our stock donors but we also received our very first cryptocurrency donation in January.

CRYPTOCURRENCY EXPLAINED

Cryptocurrency or "crypto" is a digital currency that uses cryptography to allow secure online transactions without a bank or government.

The first cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, was introduced to the world in 2009, and today nearly one in five Americans has invested in, traded, or used cryptocurrency.

And because donors do not pay capital gains taxes on donated cryptocurrency, crypto holders are quickly becoming one of the most charitable demographics in philanthropy.

EC now accepts stock, mutual funds, grants from donor advised funds, cryptocurrency, as well as donations via PayPal, Venmo, Google and Apple Pay right from our donation page, easternchristian.org/donate - just click on "Stock, Crypto, and More" to get started.

Did you know? Nearly one in five Americans has invested in, traded, or used crypto; and EC is now set up to accept cryptocurrency, stock, mutual funds, and grants from donor advised funds.

EC launches new young alumni events

Three new events for recent graduates

In an effort to strengthen relationships with our valued alumni and provide opportunities for fellowship, EC launched three new events this fall specifically designed for our young graduates.

While HomeComing has always been a tradition that draws alumni back to EC, this year we introduced an extra event specifically for alumni who graduated within the last 10 years.

Cannoli in the Courtyard took place after the HomeComing soccer game in the beautiful high school courtyard. This casual gathering included a variety of desserts, a hot chocolate bar, music and cornhole. We're excited to host this event again next fall and hope to see it grow into a beloved tradition.

In November, we welcomed young alumni back for our annual Alumni Chapel, held the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. This year's Alumni Chapel had over 50 recent graduates return to campus for a standing-room-only chapel in the auditorium. After chapel, alumni gathered in the ditto Student Commons for coffee and a continental style breakfast.

In January, young alumni were invited to a casual dinner in the ditto Student Commons prior to the leadership event featuring Dr. David Cook, a Christian performance psychology coach who spoke on gaining a competitive advantage in all areas of your life. The evening also provided networking opportunities. One recent alumna even connected with a current EC parent whose company offers internships in her field of study. Moments like these highlight the strength of the EC community as it continues to support its graduates after high school.

Speaking of networking, our final event of the 2024-2025 school year will be an opportunity designed to connect recent graduates with EC's business partners. This event will take place in late spring once college students return home for the summer.

Stay tuned for more information and please make sure we have your up-to-date contact information by visiting www.easternchristian.org/alumniupdate.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Spring Golf Outing

May 19, 2025

**Athletic Booster Club
Beefsteak**

May 28, 2025

**HomeComing
Weekend**

September 26-27, 2025

Giving Tuesday

December 2, 2025

Questions? Contact events@easternchristian.org

GIVING TUESDAY December 2024

Eastern Christian School's annual Giving Tuesday event was a resounding success, raising over \$153,000 thanks to the support of our community.

For the past two years, donors have offered matching gifts to motivate and inspire others to participate on this global day of generosity. One such donor shares, "We are grateful for the blessings we've been granted so that we may share them with this school."

Each year, our parents, alumni, teachers, staff, business partners and friends have exceeded all goals and expectations. Together, our community has built an academic environment where students feel safe, supported and seen. This sense of belonging extends beyond the classroom, creating a community where students develop strong connections with one another and deepen their relationship with God, a distinctive quality that EC holds in high regard.

We thank God for our friends and supporters. We thank him for his provision and faithfulness. And we thank God for the many blessings that he has granted us so that we may truly make a difference in the lives of every one of our students.

HomEComing 2024

We remain filled with gratitude and praise to God for the incredible HomEComing event that EC hosted last October. Here are some highlights:

The Alumni and Friends Golf Outing teed off the HomEComing events on Monday, October 7, at Wallkill Golf Club in Middletown, NY, raising almost \$18,000 for the Athletic Booster Club.

On Friday, October 18, the EC varsity boys soccer team secured a thrilling victory against Passaic Charter. Later that evening, alumni from the classes of 2015 to 2024 gathered for Cannoli in the Courtyard, a new event designed to foster community among our most recent graduates.

The next morning, the Heritage Reunion Breakfast brought together nearly 90 alumni who graduated from EC 50 or more years ago. This special event provided an opportunity for fellowship and reminiscing.

Both the girls' JV and varsity volleyball teams claimed HomEComing victories over Waldwick High School in the Wyckoff campus gym. Enthusiastic fans cheered as both teams secured wins in straight two-set matches.

The Community Picnic at the Wyckoff campus welcomed approximately 600 attendees who enjoyed a beautiful day of fellowship, food and fun. The highlight

of the afternoon was the dedication of the brand-new turf field, a proud moment for the entire EC community.

In the middle school gym, the knockout tournament saw some tough competition in the junior and adult divisions. HomEComing weekend wrapped up with the student dance in the high school gym, closing out the festivities on a high note.

Thank you to all our volunteers who served at this year's picnic. We could not have done it without you.

A SPECIAL SHOUT OUT

At recent HomEComing Picnics on the Wyckoff campus, attendees have had the pleasure of enjoying Korean cuisine provided by EC's Korean parent community.

Since 2022, Korean parents have sought ways to share their culture

with the broader EC community after learning some students were hesitant to bring Korean-style lunches to school. Their efforts have not only introduced Korean dishes at the picnic but have also led to the donation of over 30 books on Korean culture, food

and history to the ECES library. This year, they served nearly 200 attendees at the picnic and raised funds to donate books to every campus. EC thanks the Korean parent community for their commitment to service, inclusion and cultural enrichment.

Tribute to Herman Jeffer

A devoted alumnus, longtime supporter, and friend

Eastern Christian School mourns the passing of Herman Jeffer, a devoted alumnus, longtime supporter, and friend. A graduate of the Class of 1943, Jeffer served on the EC school board, participated in various committees and provided legal counsel and guidance for many years.

"Herman exemplified our core values: seeking truth, serving others, fostering community, showing compassion, and promoting academic excellence," says **Dr. Ruth Kuder**. "He will be deeply missed."

Maura Byrnes described Jeffer as "the quintessential EC alumnus." She adds, "He was a lifelong learner, amazingly generous, and demonstrated his faith every day. It was always a joy to be in his company. We will treasure our memories of him."

Jeffer played a key role in EC's **Building on a Firm Foundation** campaign, providing a substantial lead gift to launch the construction of six new classrooms at the Wyckoff campus. "He was delighted to support EC and our students," Byrnes says. "At the request of his family, we are honored to name the new addition The Marjorie and Herman Jeffer Educational Wing."

Despite his generosity, Jeffer never sought recognition. He often donated under the pseudonym "Piet Hein," a nod to the 17th-century Dutch privateer known for his legendary plunder of silver and chocolate. Over the years, his quiet contributions supported the high school's turf field, student scholarships, research prizes and resources for the golf team.

His legacy of kindness, faith, and service will leave a lasting impact on the EC community. The following is an abbreviated version of his published obituary:

HERMAN MATTHEW JEFFER **June 6, 1925 – January 5, 2025**

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of our beloved uncle, Herman Matthew Jeffer. After 99 years of a remarkable and adventurous life filled with love, friendship, and family, Herman went to be with the Lord on January 5, 2025.

Herman was born on June 6, 1925, to Dutch immigrants Garrett and Petronella Jeffer. Raised in a loving Christian household with four brothers and three sisters, Herman's upbringing instilled in him faith, resilience, and a deep sense of community.

In 1952, Herman married the love of his life, Marjorie Sisco. Together, they shared 68 wonderful years of marriage until Marjorie's passing in 2020.

During World War II, Herman joined the U.S. Army at the age of 18, training as a paratrooper and sniper. On one of Herman's training jumps, he broke his leg, sparing him from the jump his unit made during the D-Day invasion. Following the war, Herman pursued higher education at Calvin College, Duke University (MBA), and NYU Law School (JD). He spent decades practicing law with Jeffer, Hopkinson & Vogel, with his valued partners of over 50 years; loyal client relationships became a hallmark of his career. In 1961, he was admitted to practice law before the U.S. Supreme Court, successfully arguing a case on behalf of his client that changed certain U.S. banking laws still in force today.

Herman was also an astute business leader and investor. He served as a director of countless public and private financial institutions and as counsel to financial, municipal, and not-for-profit entities. He founded numerous local and regional banks, invested in various startups in manufacturing and technology industries, and developed real estate projects.

Herman and Marjorie's passion for the slopes took them to Vermont and Colorado, Switzerland, the Dolomites in Italy, and other alpine destinations. They spent many weekends with friends and family at their Vermont residences. Herman and Marjorie also found tremendous joy in golf. Herman was also a devoted football fan. His love of music, especially opera, was a defining part of his life.

A man of curiosity and generosity, Herman embraced life's opportunities with enthusiasm and exuberance. Whether experimenting with the latest technology, stargazing through a powerful telescope, or transforming an old school building into condos, he was always eager

to try something new. An informed and passionate observer of current events, Herman was never shy about expressing his views and acted as a mentor and role model for many. He also dedicated his time and resources to causes he believed in, including Eastern Christian School, Christian Health and Calvin University.

Herman is survived by his sister-in-law, Jeanette Jeffer, numerous nephews and nieces, and countless friends. The family extends their heartfelt gratitude to all who enriched Herman's life and offered him support throughout his remarkable journey.

Herman will be remembered as a man of faith, family, and adventure—a life full-lived, leaving behind a legacy of love and inspiration.

Of all his accomplishments, Herman will perhaps be best remembered for his interest in and kindness to everyone he encountered. If you wish to do something in Herman's memory, reach out to a child, grandchild, niece or a nephew, a friend or an acquaintance, and surprise them with a little extra attention and care.

HIS LEGACY OF KINDNESS, FAITH, AND SERVICE WILL LEAVE A LASTING IMPACT ON THE EC COMMUNITY.

ALUMNI NEWS

In Memoriam

June 25, 2024 - January 20, 2025

ALUMNI

Herman Jeffer '43
1/5/25 Wyckoff, NJ

Bernice (Van Halsema)
Vanden Berg '44
11/15/24 Grand Rapids, MI

Kathryn (De Nooy) Arnold '45
7/2/24 Portage, MI

Radia (Vieldhouse) Elder '49
8/20/24 Belvidere, NJ

Lorraine (Locker) Kossen '49
8/5/24 Orlando, FL

Hilda (Hovan) Cook '50
1/6/25 Stamford, CT

Kathleen (Andringa) Vooman '51
10/11/24 Frederick, MD

Ruth (Smith) Junta '52
1/9/25 Mahwah, NJ

Jacob Heerema '53
10/11/24 Grand Rapids, MI

Frances (Van Der Plaats)
Dykhouse '53
10/19/24 North Haledon, NJ

Daniel Vander Kooy '54
10/16/24 Pompton Plains, NJ

John Dyk '54
12/16/24 North Haledon, NJ

Ann (Sundermeyer) Hill '55
7/29/24 North Potomac, MD

Peter Hagedoorn '56
1/20/25 Sussex, NJ

Carol Anne (Hulsebos)
Boonstra '57
10/26/24 North Haledon, NJ

William Sytsma '58
8/20/24 North Haledon, NJ

Anthony Van Grouw '59
12/5/24 Venice, FL

James De Ritter '59
10/28/24 North Haledon, NJ

Thomas Bradford '60
10/14/24 Atlanta, GA

Henrietta (Kuperus) Sytsema '61
11/8/24 Sussex, NJ

Lynda (Walkotten) Winnick '65
11/4/24 Issaquah, WA

Lois Bender '66
10/22/24 Wayne, NJ

Carole (Anderson) Touw '67
6/30/24 Wyckoff, NJ

Kenneth Zuidema '74
8/2/2024 Emmaus, PA

Beverly (Hanse) Hubers '80
8/10/24 Troy, MI

David Boonstra '80
10/25/24 Mahwah, NJ

Jennifer Lucas '87
10/7/24 Seaside Park, NJ

Ashley Oettinger '06
6/28/24 Riverdale, NJ

FORMER
FOUNDATION
BOARD MEMBER

Jim Forrest
10/17/2024 Boonton Township, NJ

Alumni updates

1955: *John Steen* was awarded the 2024 Frank L. Geise Textile Award from Thomas Jefferson University. The award is given to honor an individual's exceptional contributions to innovation in textile design, technology, or marketing and their significant and lasting impact on the textile industry.

1982: *Richard Cerba* recently began serving as the Principal of Providence Classical School of Rock Hill, a

covenantal classical Christian K-to-12 school in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Prior to working at Providence Classical School of Rock Hill, Richard served seven terms in the Maine State Legislature.

2020: *Cassie DeJulia* is currently serving on staff as a Worship Resident at Perimeter Church in Atlanta. As a part of a department led by Christian musician Laura Story, Cassie will be trained in worship arts.

Reunions

The class of 1974 celebrated their 50th reunion on Friday, October 18, 2024 at Portobello Restaurant in Oakland.



Row 1: Jody Pruiksma, Linda Jellema Bruins, Kathy Sluis Bristley, Debbie Woudenberg Steenstra, Karen Veenstra Nelson, Janis Tuit Warden, Joan Van Hook Ryder, Carol Dykstra Rivera, Ellen Rietveld Zuidema; **Row 2:** Ken Miller, Joan Klein Dobutovich, Elaine Bush Sedaghi, Victoria Van Den Berg, Jack Kooreman, Glenn Van Heemst, Bob Fieldhouse, Sheryl Van Fleet Fieldhouse, Barb Sankey De Leeuw, Betsy Leesman Ertmann, Tim Malefyt, Jill Schuurman Malefyt, Glenn Sietsma; **Row 3:** Russ Bouwense, John Ringer, Bill Dykstra, John Lindemulder, Mark Veenema, Dave Visbeen, Ron Fieldhouse, Randy Palmer, Pat Leo Jacobs, Al Maas, Cathy Soodsma Lagerveld, Bob Baker, Dennis Kuiken, Bob Westra, Kevin Roukema

WE WANT YOUR NEWS!

Recognizing that more of our alumni now turn to social media for information on personal celebrations, Eastern Christian School will be following trends in higher education publications by increasingly shifting toward featuring updates on academics, ministry and career.

Please let us know about the milestones and big moments from your year, like professional accomplishments, church and ministry involvement, and advanced academic degrees. We would also like to hear stories of how the EC community has supported you in your professional and faith journey. Eastern Christian School reserves the right to edit and/or omit submissions.

Submissions can be sent to: Alumni@easternchristian.org

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

A Message From The Foundation

Dear Friends,

At Eastern Christian, we believe that raising students of faith, vision, and influence for God's glory requires a true partnership among family, church, and school. The Foundation Office, the fundraising arm of Eastern Christian School, would like to recognize and thank all of you who have so thoughtfully and generously supported our mission during the 2023-2024 school year.

The following pages acknowledge donors who contributed between September 1, 2023 and August 31, 2024. Your donations encourage and empower our students to grow in their faith, excel academically, and make a positive impact on the world.

Thank you for your passion for Christian education, your devotion to the EC mission and for your faithful investment in our precious students. We praise the Lord for your kindness and partnership.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Maura Byrnes". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Maura" being more prominent than the last name "Byrnes".

Maura Byrnes
Executive Director, Foundation for Eastern Christian School

ANNUAL REPORT
HIGHLIGHTS
2023-2024



1,887
GIFTS RECEIVED



812
UNIQUE DONORS
of which

411
WERE ALUMNI
DONORS



\$785
*Average gift among
individual donors (not
corporate or organizational)*

Celebrating our Dedicated Supporters

The Foundation for Eastern Christian School is extremely grateful to our faculty, staff, administration, and board leadership who supported EC in the 2023-2024 academic year. You are constantly going above and beyond, and we appreciate your dedication and commitment more than words can say.
Thank you!

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Thank you to all our EC faculty, staff, administration and board supporters, along with our corporate and organizational donors!



Staff take a moment to pray during a recent in-service day.

School Profile

HISTORY



1892
YEAR ESTABLISHED



100%
INDEPENDENT
CHRISTIAN
SCHOOL

COMMUNITY



954
STUDENTS

582
FAMILIES



200+
CHURCHES
REPRESENTED



107
COMMUNITIES
REPRESENTED

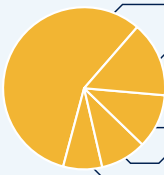


3
CAMPUSES
WITH SHUTTLE
BUS AVAILABLE



6 COUNTRIES
REPRESENTED

STUDENT
DIVERSITY



57% WHITE
15% ASIAN
13% HISPANIC or LATINO
8% BLACK
7% MULTIRACIAL

ACADEMICS



149
FACULTY
AND STAFF



95%
COLLEGE
PLACEMENT



11:1
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO



37 COLLEGE CREDITS
AVAILABLE

EXTRACURRICULAR



33
ATHLETIC TEAMS
GRADES 6-12



20+
HIGH SCHOOL
CLUBS & ACTIVITIES

THE ANNUAL FUND

The Annual Fund is a crucial account that bridges the gap between tuition and the full cost of an EC education, covering specific expenses not covered in the school's budget.

When you give an unrestricted gift to the Annual Fund, you are directly supporting our students by equipping our classrooms with the latest technology, inviting notable guest speakers to each campus, attracting and retaining outstanding teachers through professional development opportunities, providing enrichment activities, supporting extracurriculars, and so much more.

Annual Fund Donors

A heartfelt thank you to all the following Annual Fund donors. Your support in 2023-2024 made an incredible impact at EC, enabling us to launch the Eastern Christian High School Honors Academy to motivate and challenge our most ambitious high school students; implement Teaching for Transformation, a faith-based professional development program for all staff and faculty; and develop a Parent Academy to provide practical, proactive, and biblically-based resources for parents at every stage of their child's growth. The Annual Fund provided approximately 15% of the operating budget; just imagine the cut-backs we would need to make if it were not for the donors to the Annual Fund.

Thank you for making such a difference at EC!

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STEWARDSHIP REPORT

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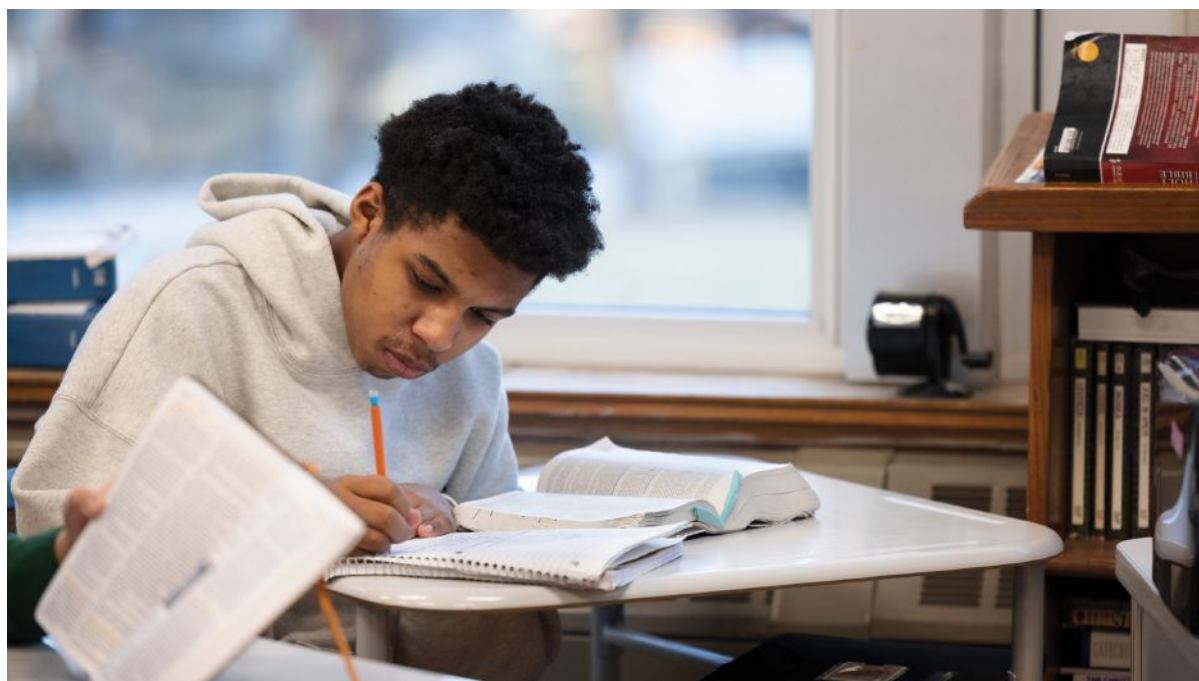
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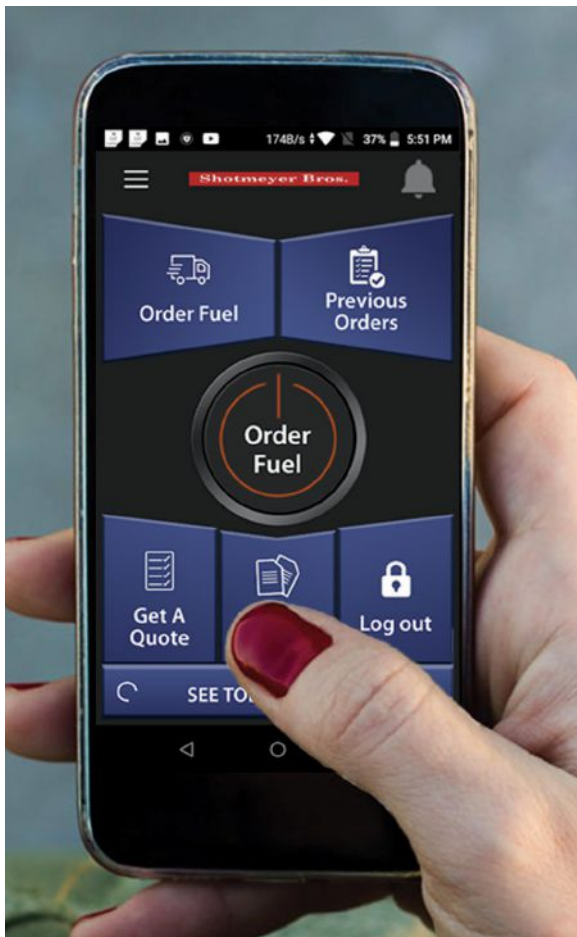
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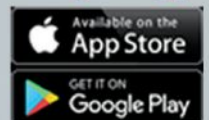
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Kayleigh Marshall



End-of-season summaries

VARSITY TENNIS

With the departure of most of last year's starting lineup, this year's team faced a steep climb to reach match readiness. Three returning seniors were joined by a group of first-time varsity starters, all of whom rose to the challenge, finishing the season with a 6-5-1 league record. **Taline Madalian** earned the honor of being the top female tennis player at EC.

Kayleigh Marshall quickly established herself as a formidable 2nd singles player, adapting her game to singles competition and winning 12 out of 16 matches, including an epic 3rd-set win over Pompton Lakes to avenge an early season marathon loss. The third singles position was

shared between junior transfer **Schuyler Boe** and senior captain **Destiny Miller**, both of whom battled valiantly against tough opponents to finish the season with a winning record in the league.

GIRLS VARSITY SOCCER

The girls soccer team had another strong season, led by senior captain **Kirsten Braunius** and junior captain **Caroline Pringle**. With a record of 14-6 (9-3 in conference), the team embraced every challenge, securing big wins over Lyndhurst in overtime and North Arlington.

Their 14 wins marked the best record in over 10 years, earning them home night games in both the County and State Tournaments.

Kirsten Braunius

Once again, the team reached the Sectional Semifinals. Kirsten Braunius capped off her career with 87 goals, which will be deeply missed, but with a strong freshman class, rising senior captain Caroline Pringle, and 10 returning starters, the team is poised for continued success in the fall of 2025.

BOYS VARSITY SOCCER

The boys soccer team had a season of growth, led by captains **Gianmarco Pulliti**, **Jason Alicea**, and **Joseph Virga**. With a 5-14 record, many players were adjusting to the varsity speed and style of play. The team's Passaic County Tournament run included two wins against Eastside-Paterson and Hawthorne Christian Academy, demonstrating the team's hard work coming to fruition.

While the season ended with some close losses, the team finished strong with back-to-back wins over Midland Park, HCA, and a key victory over Passaic

Charter for homecoming. Looking ahead, there are many promising prospects and returning players to build on for next season.

HS CROSS COUNTRY

The boys and girls cross-country teams had strong individual performances and competitive team efforts this fall. The boys finished with a 5-6 regular season record, placing 4th at the league championship. The boys carried this momentum into the county championships, where several athletes were once again recognized with honors. The boys team will look to build on their success with a strong freshman class next season.

Although the girls team didn't have enough runners for a full team, individual performances were strong, with several athletes making strides toward future success. Both teams were able to compete at the highest level in the State Meet, where **Alex Culp** once again qualified for his third straight Meet of Champions.



Gianmarco Pulliti

VARSITY VOLLEYBALL

The EC Girls Varsity Volleyball team had another successful season, led by seniors **Lillian Vogel**, **Grace Ivanov**, **Sadie Vander Pyl**, and **Mariah Ramdath**. Despite battling illness and injury, the team finished second in the conference with a 9-3 record. EC played its toughest schedule in several years, including programs like St. Mary's, Glen Rock, and Secaucus, while still managing to secure a big win





over Bogota and showcase their skills, especially on the service line. **Lillian Vogel** had a standout season, leading the team in kills. The seniors have been integral to the program over the past

four years and will be greatly missed. However, the future of EC varsity volleyball is bright, with many returning players ready to continue the team's success.

HIGH SCHOOL HONORS

Tennis

County

2nd: Taline Madalian
 HM: Kayleigh Marshall,
 Destiny Miller

League

2nd: Taline Madalian,
 Kayleigh Marshall
 HM: Destiny Miller

Girls Soccer

County

1st: Caroline Pringle
 2nd: Kirsten Braunius
 HM: Paulina Velasquez,
 Emily Minervini

League

1st: Kirsten Braunius,
 Caroline Pringle, Brielle Heerema
 2nd: Hannah Nashold,
 Paulina Velasquez
 HM: Hannah Leegwater
 COY: Seth Stadlander

Volleyball

County

1st: Lilly Vogel
 HM: Grace Ivanov,
 Sadie Vander Pyl

League

1st: Lilly Vogel, Grace Ivanov,
 Brooke Dykhous
 2nd: Sadie Vander Pyl,
 Mariah Ramdath
 HM: Alessandra Cardamone

Boys Soccer

County

HM: Jason Alicea, Julius Voswinkel
League
 2nd: Jason Alicea,
 Julius Voswinkel, Joseph Virga
 HM: Zachary Ninan

Cross Country

County

2nd: Alex Culp, Kendra Heerema
 HM: Caleb Kuperus, Daniel Tubb,
 Avery Peters, Megan Cuellar

League

1st: Alex Culp, Kendra Heerema
 2nd: Caleb Kuperus
 HM: Daniel Tubb, Megan Cuellar



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